

Middletown School Readiness Council
12:00 P.M. - 1:30 P.M.
Wednesday, June 19, 2013
Wilbert Snow School
299 Wadsworth St.
Middletown, CT 06457

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MIDDLETOWN, CONN.

Members Present: Betsy Morgan, Christine Fahey, Sheila Daniels, Wendy Berling, Beverly Lawrence, Liz Fraser, Susan Macary, Jerome Long, Ann Perzan, Lisa Golebiewski, Jerome Long, Donna Marino, Ed Bonilla and Alice Torres. Also Present: Sonya Ahuja and Izzi Greenberg.

I. Welcome & Call to Order: Betsy Morgan called the meeting to order at 12:09 P.M. Introductions were made.

II. Announcements: Sheila shared that she met the new dietician for the school district, Ava McGlew. This fall schools will be offering in-classroom breakfasts and will use a point of service system. In the future, Macdonough is poised to offer a dinner program and Food Services will work towards offering a summer meal program. She noted Betsy's initiative on this work through the Hunger Committee.

III. Acceptance of the May 15, 2013 School Readiness Council meeting: Wendy Berling moved to accept the minutes from the above mentioned date. Jerome Long seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

IV. Financial Report: was distributed and it was noted that the grant will be spent done by the end of the fiscal year.

V. Coordinator's Report:

Monthly Report: was distributed, showing few fluctuations in the parent fees. Next year there may be additional requirements for programs to share how they have spent their Care4kids funds and parents fees. We continue to serve children most in need. Twenty-two children were identified with special needs and received services in their community programs. Ann Perzan and her staff were acknowledged for their significant contributions to this work.

Quality Enhancement 2012-2013 Final Report: A handout was distributed that highlighted the work and activities including: ACES consultant provides coaching and support for NAEYC re-accreditation, learning experience plans, and CDA renewals; professional development for programs throughout the city; Week of the Young Child activities; electronic child assessment systems; book distribution program; and preschool tours of our elementary schools conducted by Sheila and Donna.

Mayor's visit: Mayor Drew arrived at 12:30 PM, presented Betsy with flowers and offered many thanks for her years of service as Council chair. He administered oaths

for Alice and Ed as new co-chairs of the School Readiness Council. They both thanked Betsy for her mentoring.

Bielefield and Macdonough Update: The YMCA will be moving into each site in early July to prepare the sites for licensing visits. Staff is being hired now and licensing applications have been submitted. Laurie Ladr, a preschool teacher at Middlesex, has been hired to teach in the three year old classroom at the Phelps Ingersol Center for Children. She will be a great asset to the YMCA program. When the college site closes at the end of June, many of the instructional materials will go to the Early Childhood associate degree program to begin to build a curriculum library. The furniture and equipment will go to state auction and it is not yet clear whether or not the timing will work for the YMCA to place a bid and acquire the items prior to the start of school. Betsy noted that it was a big scramble to replace the 27 spaces when Middlesex announced their plans to close and thanked Chris for her efforts. Going forward, this may turn into a great model.

Office of Early Childhood Update: The funds for programs that were to move to the new Office of Early Childhood were moved in the budget bill to the OEC. The bill to create the OEC was never called and so the office has not been created. Neither SDE nor the OEC has the legal authority to disburse the funds, leaving the School Readiness funds landlocked. Advocates called for a special session to pass the bill and create the new office, but legislators are reluctant to do so for a variety of reasons. There is much confidence that a resolution will be found and programs will be paid on time for their services. Liz noted that the Even Start summer program is in limbo as a result of this bill not going forward.

CT Voices Budget Summary: was distributed for review. Most early childhood programs were flat-funded. Care4Kids was cut by \$3.3 million. Family School Connection was funded again, under the Children's Trust Fund. We are expecting revisions in the fee scale, monitoring of programs, and annual program evaluations next year.

Kindergarten Kick Start Program Summer 2013 Update: In Amy's absence, Izzi reported that enrollment is nearly complete with two openings remaining at each site. She noted they are still collecting classroom supplies for the Green St. site.

Child First Update: In Christine O'Grady's absence, Chris reported that the program is full (capacity is about thirty families) with twelve families on the waiting list. Christine asked that we please continue to refer to Child FIRST so they can collect data around the need and make a request for an additional team. DCF children take priority, which is why there is a backlog for non-DCF families. If there was an additional team, it could take care of families on the wait list. It can take months for an opening to occur and that delay impacts service delivery for Early Head Start and other home visiting programs. Alice noted that they are working to not duplicate services and that the reductions in one program impact others.

Early Head Start Update: Alice noted that she submitted a plan to the feds aligned with the new reduced funding figure due to sequestration and is waiting to see what develops.

Early Literacy Work Group Update: It was noted that the Board of Education approved a new school calendar with eighteen early release days at the elementary schools. There is an expectation that some of these days will go towards PreK-K shared professional development. The preschool attendance database has been recoded for September and October and is now easier to sort and analyze. We now have a baseline and hope that our Attendance Incentive program will make improvements in attendance and tardiness. Maternal depression seems to have the biggest impact on attendance, as impacted mothers have difficulty getting up and out of the house. Discussion followed. Late bedtimes for children also has an impact on school arrival times. It was suggested that building a program for parents into the opening of the preschool day might be beneficial.

Circle of Security: Charlie Slaughter facilitated a statewide meeting held here to provide an opportunity for representatives from communities who sent staff to the COS training to come together to discuss strategies for rolling out the program. One outcome was the idea of bringing COS to already existing groups such as the foster/adoptive parent support group, grandparent support group, and FRC playgroups. Suggestions for other possibilities were church groups, Russell Library, and CRT. One child care center, Town and Country Early Learning Center, has expressed an interest in offering a training for their parents and staff. Liz noted that Even Start is going to offer COS to their staff and parents. Council members were asked to think about other already existing groups that we could utilize. Anyone interested in offering sessions for parents in Let's Talk and Raising Readers programs should let Chris know.

PreK - K Alignment Work Group Update: The four-week playgroup pilot at Bielefield went well. Donna noted that they partnered with Family School Connection and ICare for help in recruiting families. She complimented Kristen Peck and the teachers involved for providing a great experience for the children and parents. Donna is planning to move forward with more playgroup offerings in other schools. The committee will find a willing school and operate the program for longer than a four week period. The committee is looking at creating "sister" schools between each elementary school and the preschool and childcare programs that are geographically close by. The preschool and kindergarten exchange program is going to be re-instituted allowing both groups to conduct visits to the others' program.

Opportunity Knocks Update: Susan noted they are working on next year's action plan and data collection. They will be presenting data results from the Health Data Institute project at the Opportunity Knocks meeting on Tuesday, June 25th.

Even Start Update: Liz Fraser noted they have the longest wait list in years. She reiterated that their funding is in limbo, as it, too, was transferred to the non-existent

Office of Early Childhood. She also noted that because they were part of the rescission, there is less funding and they will be employing one less paraprofessional in the upcoming year. They may also have to close the infant room mid-year.

United Way Community Needs Assessment: Ed noted that United Way is conducting a county-wide survey to determine the needs of people within the county. There is a link to this online survey on the United Way's web site. They would like to hear from as many people as possible. Ed noted that they would like to hear from "not the usual suspects". The final report will be available to the public and could be a great tool for grant writing and program support requests. Focus groups have been held and the United Way is willing to conduct additional focus groups. The United Way is trying to get as much information by the December – January time period. Betsy noted that it is really important to get the needs of early childhood families to the United Way. Ed added that the four focus areas of United Way - education, income, health and housing - are also the same areas of need for these families.

Bookmobile Program: Donna reported they will begin going out next week and anyone who can meet the van and help children select their books is welcome to join them.

Thanks and Farewell to Betsy: The Council presented a butterfly bush and card to Betsy to thank her for all of her leadership as Council chair over the past sixteen years. Betsy noted that the program began in 1997 and much has happened since then. She went on to say that she is delighted that Alice and Ed are taking over for her. Wendy asked those present to raise their hands if they remembered the first meeting in the Hartford Courant building and several members did. We thank you, Betsy, for your leadership and dedication to the well-being of children. You will be missed!

VI. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 1:30 PM with thanks to those in attendance.

The summer meetings of the Middletown School Readiness Council will take place on

Wednesday, July 17th, 2013
and
Wednesday, August 21st, 2013
only if there is business to be conducted
from
12:00 - 1:30 P.M.
at
Wilbert Snow School
299 Wadsworth St.
Middletown, CT 06457

Respectfully Submitted by:
Sheila C. Daniels